



News Release

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The 2013 Michigan Reads! program highlights early reading with Leslie Helakoski's *Woolbur*

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LANSING – The Library of Michigan is pleased to announce *Woolbur*, by Michigan author Leslie Helakoski and illustrated by Lee Harper (HarperCollins, 2008) is the featured title for the 2013 “Michigan Reads! One State, One Children’s Book” program.

The Library of Michigan operates the original “Michigan Reads!” program (www.michigan.gov/michiganreads). It is devoted to increasing early childhood literacy and pre-reading readiness. Programming, events and author visits are scheduled throughout the state in September and October 2013, with the program launch on September 9 at the East Lansing Public Library, to mark the International Literacy Day.

“Reading is fun, enjoyable, and important for children,” said State Superintendent Mike Flanagan. “Having all children reading at grade level by the end of third grade is our top goal and is the bedrock of student success in school and life.”

The “Michigan Reads!” program is modeled after the “One Book, One Community” concept and is designed to emphasize the importance of shared reading practices with babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and young school-age children. These practices set the stage for fluent reading achievement in children as they enter school.

In *Woolbur*, the pages are full of movement and activity as a lamb named Woolbur finds creative ways to go about his day. When Woolbur is asked to do things, he finds original ways to accomplish everyday tasks and shares his ideas with others. The story, the language, the joyfulness of Woolbur's actions, and the wonderful illustrations all come together to make *Woolbur* a go-to book for both children and older readers as they learn how to go about their own day.

“We anticipate that this year’s Michigan Reads! program will get Michigan residents of all ages reading aloud to children, inspiring a love of reading in both readers and listeners,” said State Librarian Nancy Robertson. “*Woolbur* is a wonderful way for children and adults to find creative ways to do every day things together.”

Author Leslie Helakoski said, “I was heavily influenced by the books that were read to me when I was young. I still am. It's an honor to be part of this program.”

Helakoski is an author of many children’s books. She wrote *Woolbur* in honor of the free-spirited children in her life who have inspired her to think differently. Originally from Louisiana, she remembers as a child, “When I dreamed of doing something, I was told ‘Of course you can do it!’” She now lives in southern Michigan and still likes to hang around with people who tell her "Of course you can do it," now and then.

Sponsored by Target and in partnership with the Library of Michigan Foundation, the “Michigan Reads!” program recognizes the importance of early literacy and value of libraries in providing quality books, programs and services to children and families in Michigan. These books and services provide a foundation for literacy, enabling future school success.

For the seventh year in a row, Target continues its generous sponsorship of “Michigan Reads!,” with additional contributions from the Library of Michigan Foundation, and HarperCollins Publishers. The Lions Club of Michigan also is partnering with the Library of Michigan to participate in programs in local communities.

As a result of Target’s support, the Library of Michigan will provide a hardcover copy of the book and programming materials to all public and tribal libraries, elementary schools, Head Start and Michigan School Readiness programs across the state. In addition, Helakoski will tour a number of Michigan libraries and schools.

The “Michigan Reads!” program provides librarians, early childhood educators, parents, and caregivers with ideas to help children develop literacy skills through play-based activities. Since its inception in 2004, the program aims to promote the value and benefits of reading early and often to children, to encourage family bonding through reading and to increase awareness and usage of Michigan's libraries as excellent resources for learning.

More information about “Michigan Reads!” including dates and locations of author visits and materials for parents, teachers and caregivers is available at www.michigan.gov/michiganreads.

An agency of the Michigan Department of Education, the Library of Michigan is dedicated to promoting, advocating, and consistently working to achieve the highest level of library service to the State of Michigan, its government, its libraries and its residents. Library of Michigan also continues to seek ways to promote literacy and share important resources statewide via the Michigan eLibrary, available at www.mel.org.

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The Library of Michigan – Michigan’s official state library agency for more than 175 years – is part of the Michigan Department of Education. To learn more, visit www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan